



## Arizona Department of Agriculture

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# News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Second Illegal Slaughterhouse Shut Down** *Brother of Man Who Pled Guilty May Face Charges*

(Phoenix) -- The Arizona Department of Agriculture and the Maricopa County Attorney's Office today announced that for the second time in four months, an illegal slaughterhouse in the West Valley has been ordered to close after slaughtering animals and selling illegal meat to the public.

"This was a large-scale operation which posed serious risks to public health," stated County Attorney Andrew Thomas. "It's anyone's guess as to where meat from this establishment has ended up. At this point, we don't know if it was sold to families, restaurants or meat markets."

Department of Agriculture officials served Rafael Serrato with an injunction ordering him to stop violating the Maricopa County Health Code by processing, storing and selling meat for human consumption and disposing of animal remains at 5671 South 107th Avenue in Tolleson. He is accused of selling meat without a permit and illegally dumping the remains of cattle, pigs and goats. An inspector observed more than a dozen pigs and several goats killed by a rifle, while at least ten men worked at slaughtering the animals. Numerous customers were observed placing orders and picking up meat.

The County Attorney's Office has alleged that a 240 lb. pig purchased by an undercover inspector tested positive for chronic viral pneumonia and bore scars from a bacterial type pneumonia. Had the animal been slaughtered at an official meat processing plant, these otherwise edible parts would have been condemned as unfit for human consumption. Meat processed without necessary sanitary controls can spread many disease-causing organisms, including E. coli, Salmonella, Staphylococcus aureus and Listeria monocytogenes.

The temporary restraining order is in effect for ten days, pending a proceeding in Superior Court on Monday, January 23, 2006 to consider extending the injunction and scheduling a formal hearing. The proceeding will be in the courtroom of Judge Peter Swann in the Old Courthouse, 125 W. Washington, Room 202.

Rafael Serrato's brother, Jose Merced Serrato-Maciel (d.o.b. 8-6-59), pled guilty last week to operating an unlicensed slaughterhouse at 6808 South 107 Avenue, in Tolleson. Jose Serrato had been illegally selling insect-laden meat products containing Salmonella to the public and was fined \$3,700 and sentenced to three years of probation.